

Parent Advisory Working Group (Kent and Sussex County)

Meeting Notes
Monday July 23, 2018

Opening

Three members of the College and Career Readiness Parent Advisory Group met on Monday July 23rd.

Overview of GEAR UP

Parents expressed favorable views of the general plan. Comments during the discussion focused on:

- **Student Success Plans:** They thought that the Student Success Plan could be an excellent tool if utilized effectively by students. Some mentioned that the advisory period would be a great time to focus in on the Student Success Plan, and that it should be a tool that is continuously revisited. They also mentioned that it should be a regular conversation piece for students, and that it should allow them to reflect on different exploratory activities such as college tours and job shadowing.
- **Class Selection and Career Goals:** Conversations were held regarding the role of career aspirations in class selection. There was a concern that students were not always taking the classes that they need to be prepared for the career of their choice. Questions were raised on how to best design a system where students receive the education they need for the career they choose. Professional development, flexible tracks for student classes, and improving student awareness of class/career alignment were all mentioned as potential solutions.
- **Focusing on Student Strengths:** Parents had a discussion on the importance of acknowledging that students each have their own unique strengths, and that some will pursue a 4-year degree and that others may pursue a trade. They appreciate that the GEAR UP Grant reinforces student choice and that it does not promote one over the other. They think that it's critical that both students and parents are educated about different career options and that they are informed enough to know how to align educational choices with desired future outcomes.
- **Pre-College Programs:** A conversation was held regarding the value and importance of pre-college programs. One parent mentioned that a pre-college program was a key resource for her student while they prepared to transition to post-secondary school.

Communicating with Parents Effectively

Meeting attendees then discussed different strategies for reaching out to parents. They all felt that it was critical to capitalize on relationships and to ensure that parents were vested enough in the process to get actively involved. They all mentioned that parent engagement can be extremely difficult, and that in some cases having a pool of mentors available to students may be the best path forward. They also thought that it is important to make sure that parents are aware of the Student Success Plans and that they are taught how to use them to discuss college and career choices with their students. One attendee recommended that a quick 5-minute video be sent out to all parents to make them aware of the new Student Success Plan.

They also mentioned that emails need to be well designed and specific to parent's interests and needs. Quality is much more important than quantity. Paperwork was also listed as a barrier; the simpler the better.

In addition, attendees mentioned that staff should consider holding check-in webinars between the quarterly meetings with the Advisory Working Group to provide another method for individuals to get involved.

Follow Up

The next meeting will be held in October.